

Message Text

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PAGE 01 EC BRU 04633 231830Z

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FOR DALE GOOD, S/IL AND JOHN O'GRADY, ARA

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ICFTU, ILO, AR
SUBJECT: ARGENTINIANS APPLY FOR ICFTU MEMBERSHIP AND ASK FOR EARLY
MEETING WITH US WORKER DELEGATION IN GENEVA

REF: EC BRUSSELS 4520

1. SUMMARY: ON MAY 22, THE GENERAL WORKERS CONFEDERATION (CGT) OF ARGENTINA OFFICIALLY APPLIED FOR ICFTU MEMBERSHIP. APPROVAL OF THE APPLICATION BY THE ICFTU EXECUTIVE BOARD IN JUNE AND RATIFICATION BY THE ICFTU WORLD CONGRESS IN MEXICO NEXT OCTOBER ARE CONSIDERED PRO FORMA. FOLLOWING THE APPLICATION SUBMISSION, THE ARGENTINE DELEGATION ASKED THE MISSION LABOR ATTACHE TO CONVEY TO WASHINGTON THEIR "URGENT" DESIRE TO HAVE A MEETING WITH THE US WORKER DELEGATION IN THE EARLY STAGES OF THE ILO CONFERENCE IN GENEVA. END SUMMARY.

2. ON MAY 22 THE POWERFUL CGT OF ARGENTINA ENDED 25 YEARS OF ISOLATION BY OFFICIALLY SUBMITTING ITS APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE ICFTU. THE ARGENTINIANS SUBSEQUENTLY TOLD THE MISSION LABOR ATTACHE THAT AS A RESULT OF RECENT LABOR LEGISLATION MAKING TRADE UNION
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PAGE 02 EC BRU 04633 231830Z

MEMBERSHIP MANDATORY IN ARGENTINA UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS, THE CGT CAN NOW CLAIM SIX MILLION MEMBERS.

HOWEVER, AN ICFTU OFFICIAL TOLD US THAT THE SIZE OF CGT MEMBERSHIP FOR PERCAPITA TAX PURPOSES HAS YET TO BE DETERMINED. IN ANY EVENT, THE CGT WILL BECOME THE THIRD LARGEST ICFTU AFFILIATE BEHIND THE BRITISH TUC AND GERMAN DGB WHEN THE CGT APPLICATION IS RATIFIED BY THE ICFTU CONGRESS IN OCTOBER.

3. IN ADDITION TO HECTOR LOPEZ (SEE REFTTEL), THE ARGENTINE DELEGATION ON HAND FOR THE APPLICATION SUBMISSION CONSISTED OF CGT LEADERS BALDASSINI AND ALVAREZ AND THE "PERSONAL ADVISOR" TO THE CGT SECRETARY GENERAL, CAPDEVILLA. THE GROUP DEPARTED FOR AMSTERDAM ON MAY 23 WHERE THEY WILL BE GUESTS OF WIM KOK, GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE DUTCH NVV, BEFORE JOINING THE ARGENTINE ILO WORKER DELEGATION IN GENEVA NEXT WEEK.

4. DURING A DISCUSSION FOLLOWING THEIR MAY 22 MEETING AT THE ICFTU, THE ARGENTINIANS ASKED THE MISSION LABOR ATTACHE TO CONVEY TO WASHINGTON THEIR "URGENT" DESIRE TO HAVE A MEETING WITH THE US WORKDER DELEGATION IN THE EARLY STAGES OF THE ILO CONFERENCE IN GENEVA NEXT MONTH. WHEN WE SUGGESTED THAT THEY CONTACT AFL-CIO WORKDER DELEGATE IRVING BROWN IN PARIS TO ARRANGE FOR SUCH A MEETING, THEY SAID THEY WOULD BE TRAVELING BETWEEN NOW AND JUNE 1 AND IN ANY EVENT WOULD HAVE LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES IN COMMUNICATING DIRECTLY WITH BROWN.

5. THE ARGENTINIANS INDICATED THAT THE PROPOSED MEETING WITH THE AMERICANS HAS A TWO-FOLD PURPOSE, ONE OF WHICH IS THEIR SERIOUS CONCERN WITH THE PLO RECOGNITION ISSUE AT THE ILO. THE CGT, THEY SAID, INTENDS TO SUPPORT ANY AFL-CIO INITIATIVES AIMED AT AVERTING A CRISIS IN THE ILO WHICH THE ARGENTINANS SEE AS THE NATURAL CONSEQUENCE OF A CONFRONTATION OVER THE PLO. THEY WOULD ALSO LIKE TO DISCUSS THE FUTURE OF THE INTER-MAERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT. WHILE THE INTER-AMERICAN REGIONAL ORGANIZATION OF WORKERS (ORIT) IS STILL UNACCEPTABLE TO THE ARGENTINIANS, THEY TOLD US THAT STRONG US-ARGENTINE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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PAGE 03 EC BRU 04633 231830Z

TIES ARE IMPERATIVE IF HEMISPHERIC DEMOCRATIC TRADE UNION UNITY IS TO BE ACHIEVED. THEY SAID THAT THE RADICAL LEFT IN LATIN AMERICA IS GROWING IN STRENGTH AND POSES A SERIOUS THREAT TO ALL DOMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND IN PARTICULAR TO TRADE UNIONS AND THAT SOMETHING MUST BE DONE TO RECTIFY THE PRESENT SITUATION.

6. COMMENT: BASED ON OUR CONVERSTATIONS WITH THIS GROUP OF ARGENTINIANS, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE CGT IS CONTEMPLATING TAKING A MORE ACTIVE ROLE INTERNATIONALLY

AND MAY SEEK TO UTILIZE ITS MEMBERSHIP IN THE ICFTU TO INFLUENCE DEVELOPMENTS IN LATIN AMERICA. THEIR EXPRESSED PREFERENCE FOR WORKING WITH THE AFL-CIO IN PUTTING THINGS RIGHT IN LATIN AMERICA WOULD SEEM AT FIRST FLUSH TO BE AN ICFTU INSPIRED GESTURE AIMED AT AVOIDING PROBLEMS WITH THE AFL-CIO IN THE AREA. HOWEVER, MANY ARGENTINE LABOR LEADERS HAVE LONG CONTENDED THAT THE AFL-CIO AND THE CGT, AS THE GIANTS IN THEIR RESPECTIVE HALVES OF THE HEMISPHERE, SHOULD BE ALLIED AT THE TOP OF AN INTER-AMERICAN LABOR ORGANIZATION OTHER THAN ORIT, ALTHOUGH THE CGT HAS MADE UNSUCCESSFUL EFFORTS IN THE PAST TO ORGANIZE A PURELY LATIN AMERICAN TRADE UNION CENTRAL.

7. IT IS ALSO QUITE POSSIBLE THAT THE ARGENTINIANS MAY WANT TO USE A MEETING WITH THE US WORKER DELEGATION TO ASK AMERICAN SUPPORT FOR ELECTING AN ARGENTINIAN TO THE ILO GOVERNING BOARD. WE WERE UNABLE TO DRAW THEM OUT ON THIS POINT. HOWEVER, EVEN IF THIS IS PART OF THEIR MOTIVATION FOR SEEKING THE MEETING, IT DOES NOT DETRACT FROM THE VALIDITY OF THEIR STATED OBJECTIVE I.E. DISCUSSING THE PLO ISSUE AND THE SITUATION IN LATIN AMERICA.

ACTION REQUESTED: IF THE DEPARTMENT AGREES, THE MISSION SUGGESTS THAT THE ARGENTINE REQUEST FOR AN EARLY MEETING WITH THE US WORKER DELEGATION IN GENEVA BE CONVEYED TO THE AFL-CIO. GREENWALD

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